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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [DJ](#) [IR](#)
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI CHOD ON MILITARY CONTACTS WITH IRAN

REF: DJIBOUTI 441; 08 DJIBOUTI 999; DJIBOUTI 147

CLASSIFIED BY: James Swan, Ambassador; REASON: 1.4(A), (B), (C), (D)

1.(C) During a meeting May 4 focused on Djibouti's request for USG assistance to train Somali security forces (Ref A), Chief of Defense Major General Fathi Ahmed Houssein volunteered that he had received an Iranian military delegation in Djibouti the previous week. He said the Iranians had asked to conduct naval maneuvers in Djiboutian waters and to establish a naval facility (NFI) in Djibouti, perhaps on one of the Djiboutian islands in the Gulf of Aden. Fathi told us the GODJ had refused this request and had agreed only to allow Iranian vessels to use the port of Djibouti for refueling and re-supply, as do other nations' ships participating in counter-piracy operations in the region. Fathi said he was sharing this information with us in a spirit of transparency and partnership, in view of close USG/GODJ relations.

2.(S/NF) We note reporting in other channels that during the Iranian visit the Djiboutian military also requested Iranian surface-to-air missiles to support Djiboutian border defense. Fathi made no mention of this in our May 4 meeting. Separately, he and National Security Advisor Hassan Said Khairah told CNREURAFSWA RDML David Mercer on May 2, that Djibouti sought USG assistance with air defense for Djibouti Port - the most important economic and strategic asset in the country. Mercer said he was not prepared to address this issue and made no commitments, but agreed to discuss this request further with the NAVAf Commander.

3.(C) Ambassador has previously underscored to Foreign Minister Mahmoud Youssouf the United Nations Security Council Resolutions prohibiting arms transfers from Iran (Ref B).

4.(C) Comment: As a small and poor country, Djibouti's foreign policy aims to maintain good relations with a diverse range of foreign partners - including Iran. President Ahmedinejad made a one-day visit to Djibouti in February (Ref C). Fathi's comments suggest that the GODJ will continue to try to develop relations with Iran, but understands the need for caution in deepening mil-to-mil ties.

SWAN